

United States Mint Moves Forward to Create a Modern Ultra-High Relief Double Eagle Gold Coin

May 2, 2008

WASHINGTON — Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson has authorized the United States Mint to issue a one-ounce ultra-high relief 24-karat gold coin, creating a 2009 version of what many have called the most beautiful gold piece ever made: the 1907 Augustus Saint-Gaudens \$20 Double Eagle. The mintage of the new coin will be unlimited for one year. Among the production specifications approved by Secretary Paulson are the new coin's business-strike finish and a diameter of 27 millimeters.

Only 2009-dated coins will be minted. The coins will go on sale in early 2009, although sales may continue into 2010 if inventory exists.

United States Mint Director Ed Moy announced at a meeting of the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee (CCAC) on March 13, 2008, that the agency planned to recreate the Saint-Gaudens 1907 ultra-high relief \$20 gold piece commonly referred to as the "Double Eagle." The initial proposal by the United States Mint to develop this 24-karat gold coin had also been authorized by Secretary Paulson.

Through advancements in technology, the United States Mint can today produce the ultra-high relief coin envisioned by Augustus Saint-Gaudens in the early 20th century. A 27-millimeter diameter gold blank, more than 50% thicker than other United States Mint one-ounce 24-karat gold coins, will be used, because of its historical significance and the opportunity it provides to achieve the greater depth and relief to which Saint-Gaudens had aspired.

In most respects, the new legal tender gold coin will authentically reproduce the ultra-high relief gold piece. The obverse design (heads side) will be based on the obverse of the original Saint-Gaudens design executed in 1907. The reverse (tails side) also will be based on those pieces and will include 14 sun rays. The edge of the coin will feature the same raised edge-lettering as the 1907 pieces. The edge-lettering features the inscription "E Pluribus Unum" with stars serving as delimiters between the letters.

As approved by Secretary Paulson, the new coin will have several modern elements. The obverse of the new coin will feature 50 stars, instead of the original 46 stars on the obverse (heads side), which represented the 46 states in the Union in 1907. The CCAC recommended that the obverse design be modified in this manner to honor all 50 states in the Union today. Also, responding to the recommendation of the Commission of Fine Arts, the United States Mint will inscribe the Roman numerals "MMIX" (2009) in a style similar to the original Saint-Gaudens design. Additionally, the inscription "In God We Trust" will appear on the reverse design of the new coin because current law requires placement of this inscription on all U.S. coinage.

The new coin is authorized under 31 U.S.C. § 5112(i)(4)(C), which allows the Secretary of the Treasury to prescribe program procedures and specifications for minting and issuing new gold coins. This provision also gives the Secretary the discretion to select each such coin's designs, varieties, quantities, denomination, and inscriptions.

The United States Mint will continue to mint and issue the 24-karat American Buffalo Gold Bullion and Proof Coins, the 24-karat First Spouse Gold Proof and Uncirculated Coins, and the 22-karat (91.67% fineness) American Eagle Gold Bullion, Proof and Uncirculated Coins.

1907 Ultra-High Relief Gold Coin Designs

In 1907 Augustus Saint-Gaudens sculpted what many have called the most beautiful piece ever created by the United States. There were four versions of the Saint-Gaudens \$20 gold piece created in 1907. The first was a 34-millimeter diameter coin in ultra-high relief, with the date in Roman numerals. Approximately 20 of these coins were produced before it was determined that the minting process was too arduous for mass production. Most of the 20 coins are in private hands.

A second version with similar design elements and ultra-high relief was minted on a 27-millimeter diameter blank that had about twice the thickness of a \$10 gold piece. However, the United States Mint realized that there was no authority to issue coins using those specifications. Of these gold pieces, there are two still known to exist, and they are housed at the

Smithsonian Institution.

The third version returned to the 34–millimeter diameter. The design remained similar, but was executed in high relief, rather than ultra–high relief. Approximately 12,000 of these coins were minted and issued. The fourth and final version, which was minted at the end of 1907, lowered the relief even more, and replaced the Roman numerals with Arabic numerals. These coins were minted in mass quantities for circulation.

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